

MATTHEW 16

Jewish Leaders Test Jesus

1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 But he replied to them:

When it is evening, you say: It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. 3 And in the morning: There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening. Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky but cannot discern the signs of the times? 4 An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. And a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.

And he left them and went away.

Beware of the Teaching of the Jewish Leaders

5 And the disciples came to the other side of the sea [of Galilee], but they had forgotten to bring any bread. 6 And Jesus said to them:

Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

7 They began to discuss this among themselves saying:

He said that because we did not bring any bread.

8 But Jesus, aware of this, said:

You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? 9 Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many [Jewish] baskets (κοφίνους) you picked up? 10 Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many [Gentile] baskets (σπυρίδας) you picked up? 11 How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

12 Then they understood that he did not say to beware of the leaven of bread but of the teaching (διδασχί) of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter's Great Confession

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he was asking his disciples:

Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

14 And they said:

Some say John the Baptist. And others, Elijah. But still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

15 He said to them:

But who do you say that I am?

16 Simon Peter answered:

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

17 Jesus said to him:

Blessed (μακάριος) are you, Simon Barjona,¹ because flesh and blood did not reveal (ἀποκαλύπτω, aor.) this to you (sing.) but my Father who is in heaven. 18 But I also say to you (sing.) that you are Peter (Πέτρος), and upon this rock (πέτρα) [the confession of who Jesus is] I will build my church (μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν), and the gates of Hades [Satan, the demons, and the world] will not defeat (κατισχύω) it. 19 I will give you (sing.) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound (δέω, perf. pass. part.) in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed (λύω) in heaven.

20 Then he ordered (διαστέλλω)² the disciples that they should tell no one that he was the Messiah.³

First Death and Resurrection Prediction

21 From that time⁴ Jesus began to explain (δεικνύω) to his disciples that he must: (1) go to Jerusalem;⁵ (2) suffer many things from the [Jewish] elders, chief priests, and scribes; (3) be killed; and (4) be raised up on the third day.⁶ 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke (ἐπιτιμάω, pres.) him saying:

¹ Of all the Jews in Jesus' day, it was Peter who earned the right to be the first to pronounce the Great Confession.

² “[T]o define or express in no uncertain terms what one must do, *order, give orders*” (BDAG, 236).

³ Later, the disciples will be responsible for telling everyone Jesus is the Messiah.

⁴ We must first understand who Jesus is. Only then are we ready to understand what he did.

⁵ Jerusalem is the den of lions. Is the center of opposition against Messiah Jesus. Jesus' official offer and Israel's official rejection must take place in Jerusalem. There is no other place where it could happen. Jesus must be crucified on Mount Moriah. He must be raised east of Jerusalem.

⁶ Jesus must fulfill Isaiah 53 and the types of Joseph, David, and Jonah, in accordance with God's plan. **Jon 1:17** 17 Yahweh appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

God forbid it, Lord! This will never happen to you.⁷

23 But he turned and said to Peter:

Get behind me, Satan (σατανᾶ)!⁸ You are a trap (σκάνδαλον) to me, for you are not setting your mind on (φρονέω, pres.)⁹ the things of God (τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ) but the things of people (τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων).¹⁰

Take Up Your Cross

24 Then¹¹ Jesus said to his disciples (μαθηταῖς):¹²

If anyone [any believer] desires (pres.) to come (aor.) after me (ὀπίσω μου) [as a disciple in phase two], he must (1) deny (ἁπαρνέομαι, aor.)¹³ himself [the things of this world]; (2) take up (aor.) his [particular] cross (σταυρός) [accepting the world's hatred and rejection]; and (3) keep following (ἀκολουθέω, pres.) me [consistently over a lifetime in phase two].¹⁴ 25 For whoever [as a disciple in phase two] desires (pres.) to save (σώζω, aor.) his [present] life (ψυχή)¹⁵ [through friendship with the world] will lose (ἀπόλλυμι, fut.) it [blessing and rewards in the Messianic kingdom and beyond], but whoever loses (ἀπόλλυμι) his [present] life [as a disciple in phase two] on account of me [accepting the world's hatred and rejection] will find (εὕρισκω, fut.) it [future blessing and rewards]. 26 For what good will it do (ὠφελέω) a person if he gains the whole world (κόσμος) [in the present] but suffers the loss of (ζημιόω, aor.) his life (ψυχή) [blessings and rewards in the future]? Or what will a person give [in the present] in exchange for his life (ψυχή) [blessings and rewards in the future]? 27 For the Son of Man is about to (μέλλω, pres.) come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then [at his judgment seat, as the Messianic kingdom begins] he will recompense (ἀποδίδωμι, fut.) each one [believer or disciple] according to his

⁷ Peter is focused on the suffering and killing, not on the raising. How could the Jewish leaders cause the Messiah, the Son of God, to suffer and be killed?

⁸ “Peter is called Satan by Jesus, because his attempt to turn Jesus aside fr[om] his divine assignment to accept the consequences of his involvement with humanity has made him a tempter of a diabolical sort, who might thwart the divine plan of salvation” (BDAG, 916-917).

⁹ “[T]o give careful consideration to someth., *set one’s mind on, be intent on*” (BDAG, 1065).

¹⁰ Peter is thinking from the flesh, not from the Spirit. His mind is on the things of people, not on the things of God.

¹¹ Vv. 24-28 are in direct response to Peter’s rebuke in v. 22.

¹² Jesus has told the disciples that he will suffer, die, and be raised. If the disciples are to follow Jesus to Jerusalem, they need a mindshift.

¹³ “[T]o act in a wholly selfless manner, *deny oneself*” (BDAG, 97).

¹⁴ **Lk 9:23** 23 If anyone desires to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. **1 Pe 2:21** 21 Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps.

¹⁵ **Lk 6:9** 9 Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life (ψυχή) or to destroy it?

[sustained] activity (πρᾶξις).¹⁶ 28 Truly I say to you [disciples], there are some of those who are standing here [Peter, James, and John] who will not experience (γεύομαι, aor.) [physical] death (θάνατος) until they see [a preview¹⁷ of] the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

¹⁶ “[A] function implying sustained activity, *acting, activity, function*” (BDAG, 859).

¹⁷ The Transfiguration is a sneak preview of Jesus in the Messianic kingdom. It builds anticipation. It gets moviegoers into the theatre for the real thing.

Biblical Theology

Sanctification

1. The subject of Mt 16:24-28 is phase two, not phase one. It is sanctification and discipleship, not justification. At issue is commendation at the judgment seat of Messiah, not condemnation at the final judgment. We know this because:
 - a. Matthew has made clear throughout his gospel that there are many believers in Jesus but relatively few disciples. This is by Jesus' choice.
 - (1) **Mt 4:25-5:2** 25 Large crowds followed [Jesus] from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan. 1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain. And after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 He opened his mouth and began to teach them saying....
 - (2) **Mt 14:19-21** 19 Ordering the crowds [of believers] to sit down on the grass, he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, he blessed the food. And breaking the loaves he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, 20 and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. 21 There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.
 - (3) **Mt 15:36-38** 36 [Jesus] took the seven loaves and the fish. And giving thanks, he broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 37 So they all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. 38 And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.
 - b. Much of Matthew's focus is the training of the disciples for their Great Commission work.
 - (1) **Mt 28:16-20** 16 Now the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped, but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying: All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. And look, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
 - c. In Mt 16:24-28, Jesus is talking privately with his disciples who have already believed in him. He is not talking with the crowds nor with the Jewish leaders.
 - d. The New Testament makes clear we are not justified by: (a) denying ourselves; (b) taking up our crosses; and (c) continuing to follow Jesus for a lifetime. That is much too difficult for us. If that were the standard of justification, none of us would be justified. It would be justification by works, on the back end, through the back door.
 - e. Because none of us can ever be certain we will continue to carry our cross and follow Jesus in the future, our eternal security and assurance of salvation would always be in doubt. This lack of assurance does great damage to one's phase two Christian life.
 - f. We are not justified by carrying our crosses. We are justified because the Lord Jesus carried his.
 - (1) **Jn 19:30** 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said: It is finished (Τετέλεσται)! And he bowed his head and gave up his breath.

2. We err if we tell unbelievers that, in order to be justified, they must: (1) deny themselves, (2) take up their crosses, and (3) keep following Jesus for a lifetime. Unbelievers do not have the capacity to do these things. The only thing for an unbeliever to do is to believe in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Messiah on his or her behalf.
 - a. **Jn 3:13-18** 13 No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven: the Son of Man [Jesus]. 14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 so that whoever believes will in him have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be delivered through him. 18 He who believes in him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.
 - b. **Jn 3:36** 36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.
 - c. **Jn 6:28-29** 29 Jesus answered and said to them: This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.
 - d. **Jn 20:30-31** 30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.
 - e. **Ac 16:30-31** 30 [The Philippian jailer] said: Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 They said: Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. (1) New Zealand Evangelist Julian Bachelor is wrong when he suggests....
3. Disciples are fishers of people, harvest workers, and bond-servants of the Messianic king. Not all believers fit this description. Not all are qualified. Not all go the distance. Not all develop the capacity. Not all center their lives 24/7 on the things of God. They are:
 - (1) Fishers of people.
 - (a) **Mt 4:19-20** 19 [Jesus] said to them: Follow me, and I will make you [Simon Peter and Andrew] fishers of [people]. 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.
 - (2) Like Old Testament prophets.
 - (a) **Mt 5:11-16** 11 Blessed are you [disciples] when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 - (3) Harvest workers.
 - (a) **Mt 9:36-38** 36 Seeing the crowds [of potential believers], [Jesus] felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples: The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore implore the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.
 - (4) Treasure Revealers.
 - (a) **Mt 13:51-52** 51 Have you [disciples] understood all these things? They said to [Jesus]: Yes. 52 And Jesus said to them: Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household [of believers], who brings out of his treasure things [teaching] new and old.

- (5) Bread distributors.
- (a) **Mt 14:19-21** 19 Ordering the crowd to sit down on the grass, [Jesus] took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward the sky, he blessed it. And breaking the loaves he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 So they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. 21 There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.
- (6) Slaves of the King.
- (a) **Mt 22:1-10** 1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables saying: 2 The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3 And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, but they were unwilling to come. 4 Again he sent out other slaves saying: Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fattened livestock are butchered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast! 5 But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7 But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. 8 Then he said to his slaves: The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast. 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good. And the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.
4. Great harm results when we wrongly interpret Jesus is talking about phase one justification when he is really talking about phase two sanctification. Two things happen:
- a. We make it impossible for anyone to come to Messiah Jesus in phase one.
- (1) **Mt 11:28-30** 28 Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
- b. We dumb down what it means to follow Jesus in discipleship in phase two.
- (1) **Lk 9:57-62** 57 As they were going along the road, someone said to [Jesus]: I will follow you wherever you go. 58 And Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. 59 And he said to another: Follow me. But he said: Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. 60 But he said to him: Allow the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God. 61 Another also said: I will follow you, Lord, but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home. 62 But Jesus said to him: No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.
5. What Jesus says to the disciples in Mt 16:24-28 has already been said to them. Jesus has been speaking this way to them all along. The repetition is purposeful. It reinforces the fact that the disciples have a very difficult road ahead of them. But persevering on that road will be worth it in the end (e.g., *Lord of the Rings*).
- a. **Mt 10:24-25** 24 A disciple (μαθητής) is not above his teacher (διδάσκαλος), nor a slave (δούλος) above his master (κύριος). 25 It is sufficient (ἀρκετός) for the disciple

that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the housemaster (οικοδεσπότης) Beelzebul, how much more the household members (οικιακός)!

- b. **Mt 10:32-33** 32 Everyone who will [publicly] acknowledge (ὁμολογέω, fut.)¹⁸ me before people, I will also [publicly] acknowledge (ὁμολογέω, fut.) him [at my judgment seat] before my Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever [publicly] denies (ἀρνέομαι, aor. subj.)¹⁹ me before people, I will also [publicly] deny (ἀρνέομαι, fut.) him [at my judgment seat] before my Father who is in heaven.²⁰
 - c. **Mt 10:38-39** 38 He who does not take up his cross (σταυρός) and keep following (ἀκολουθεῖ, pres.) after me (ὀπίσω μου) is not worthy of me [to be my disciple]. 39 The one [disciple] who finds his life (ψυχή) [in the present] will lose (ἀπόλλυμι, fut.) it [blessing and rewards in the future], but the one who loses (ἀπόλλυμι, aor.) his life (ψυχή) [in the present] on account of me will find (εὕρισκω, fut.) it [in the future].
 - d. **Mt 19:28-30** 28 Jesus said to [the disciples]: Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me [the twelve disciples], in the regeneration [Messianic kingdom] when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or farms on account of my name, will receive many times as much and will inherit eternal life.
6. Jesus is challenging his disciples to persevere in phase two, to think and live exclusively according to the things of God and not according to the things of people. The disciples are in danger of thinking and living as “normal” people do. If they do so, they will fail.
- a. **Mt 16:23-24** 23 Get behind me, Satan (σατανᾶ)!²¹ You are a trap (σκάνδαλον) to me, for you are not thinking (φρονέω, pres.) the things of God (τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ) but the things of people (τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων). 24 Then...²²
7. The disciples need ongoing salvation from the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil in phase two if they are to produce large amounts of fruit. In other words, disciples will produce large amounts of fruit only if they understand God’s plan and set their minds exclusively on the things of God.
- a. **Mt 5:11-12** 11 Blessed are you [disciples] when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you on account of me (ἔνεκεν ἑμοῦ). 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 - b. **Mt 13:22-23** 22 The one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, but the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke

¹⁸ To acknowledge, admit, agree, assure, claim, commit, concede, confess, grant, praise, profess, promise.

¹⁹ To deny, disclaim, disdain, disown, disregard, refuse, renounce, repudiate. **Mt 26:70-72** 70 [Peter] denied (ἀρνέομαι) it before them all saying: I do not know what you are talking about. 71 When he had gone out to the gateway, another saw him and said to those who were there: This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied (ἀρνέομαι) it with an oath: I do not know the man.

²⁰ This refers to loss of reward at the judgment seat of Messiah, not eternity in the lake of fire.

²¹ “Peter is called Satan by Jesus, because his attempt to turn Jesus aside fr[om] his divine assignment to accept the consequences of his involvement with humanity has made him a tempter of a diabolical sort, who might thwart the divine plan of salvation” (BDAG, 916–917).

²² Peter is thinking from the flesh, not from the Spirit.

- the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it, who indeed produces fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.
8. It may seem prudent and safe for us to seek the favor of the people around us, to be people pleasers. But this likely means we are not disciples. We are forfeiting future blessing and rewards. Jesus will be ashamed of us. Disciples are not people pleasers.
- (1) **Lk 6:26** 26 Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.
 - (2) **Ro 1:1** 1 Paul, a bond-servant of Messiah Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God....
 - (3) **Ga 1:10** 10 Am I [Paul] now seeking the favor of people or of God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a bond-servant [disciple] of Messiah.
 - (4) **Jas 1:1** 1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Messiah, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.
 - (5) **2 Pe 1:1** 1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Messiah, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Messiah.
 - (6) **Col 4:12-13** 12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Messiah, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the desire of God. 13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.
9. Rewards at the judgment seat of Messiah come from consistent, sustained activity over a long period of time.
- a. **Mt 10:24** 24 If anyone desires (pres.) to come (aor.) after me (ὀπίσω μου) [as a disciple in phase two], he must (1) deny (ἅπαρνέομαι, aor.)²³ himself; (2) take up (aor.) his cross (σταυρός); and (3) keep following (ἀκολουθέω, pres.) me.
 - b. **Mt 10:27** 27 For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then [at his judgment seat, as the Messianic kingdom begins] he will recompense (ἀποδίδωμι, fut.) each one [disciple] according to his [sustained] activity (πρᾶξις).
10. It is very much worth coming after Jesus as a disciple. Disciples will be hugely rewarded.
- a. **Mt 25:19-21** 19 After a long time the master of those bondslaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents saying: Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents. 21 His master said to him: Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.
11. As long as you have breath and your heart is beating, there is still time for you to make the things of God everything. So deny yourself, take up your cross, and keep following the Lord Jesus Messiah. Whatever it takes!
- a. “I’m a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I’m a disciple of His and I won’t look

²³ “[T]o act in a wholly selfless manner, *deny oneself*” (BDAG, 97).

back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I'm done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits or popularity. I don't have to be right, or first, or tops, or recognized, or praised or rewarded. I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by Holy Spirit power. My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my guide is reliable and my mission is clear. I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. ...I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. ...And when He does come for His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear!"²⁴

Eschatology

1. Jesus is the Messiah, and his Messianic kingdom will happen.

²⁴ Anonymous.

Notes